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# 2023 Annual Report Stoddard County Coroner's Office Brent Stidham - Coroner

JANUARY 08TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

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To continue keeping the public informed and provide transparency, I am releasing my annual Coroner's report to the residents of Stoddard County. The Stoddard County Coroner's office consists of myself and Deputy Coroner Ashley Robey. It is our mission to investigate every death in Stoddard County and provide accurate death information for death certificates and family members. Death investigations often include, ordering and attending autopsies, collecting toxicology testing, responding to scenes, interviewing witnesses, locating and notifying next of kin, speaking with primary care physicians, and obtaining medical records. I once again would like to thank our Stoddard County funeral homes, Mathis Funeral Home, Watkins Funeral Home, and Morgan Funeral Home, as well as all first responders for their professionalism and assistance in 2023.

2023 saw a spike in child fatalities. This is the worst situation imaginable for the families as well as the first responders and agencies who work

these cases. During these cases the county has a Child Fatality Review Panel that is responsible for contributing information to help determine the cause of death, identify and help implement services available to the family, and identify ways to prevent further child fatalities. All information from these meetings is confidential. Autopsies are required in children under 18, with the exception of medical situations when a State certified Child Pathologist deems it unnecessary. In addition the Missouri State Technical Assistance Team ( STAT) will reimburse counties who have an active Child Fatality Review Panel that completes the necessary procedures. In the last three

years Stoddard County has had a 100% reimbursement rate for child autopsies. This is due to conducting meetings and completing required data entry in a timely manner. The due diligence of this panel assured that all child fatalities were thoroughly investigated, while also saving Stoddard County taxpayers \$14,000 in 2023. The Stoddard County Child Fatality Review Panel consists of the following members.

Stoddard County Prosecuting Attorney Sawyer Smith Stoddard County Coroner Brent Stidham

Stoddard County Sheriff Carl Hefner, Chief Deputy Andrew Holden, Detective Garry Brady and Detective John Atkinson

Stoddard County Chief Juvenile Officer Tonya Causey ( Chairman) Members of the investigating law enforcement agency (municipalities) Members of the Stoddard County Health Department Members of the Missouri State Highway Patrol

Stoddard County Children's Division Stoddard County Health Department Stoddard County Ambulance District

It should be noted, if a death occurs in the city limits of a town with a Police Department, members of that Department attend the review meetings. In 2023 Officers from the Dexter Police Department and Bernie Police Department attended meetings that concerned children from their

respective municipalities. I would like to thank all of these agencies for their work on this panel.

Another point in this year's report is that Stoddard County did not record a single overdose death. While in some cases drug use was a potential contributing factor, there were not any that were deemed an overdose. In overdoses an autopsy or toxicology testing is always performed. It is uncommon across the state to have a county without an overdose death, however, in Stoddard County there are several reasons we are successfully changing that trend. Those reasons include the public knowledge of properly administering Narcan, the increasing availability and success of inpatient and outpatient rehab facilities in the area, excellent effort by all Stoddard County law enforcement agencies, tough prosecution for repeat offenders, and zero tolerance for dangerous drug dealers. Together all of those things are helping Stoddard County fight fentanyl and the opioid epidemic.

Unfortunately 2023 saw an increase in suicide deaths and one homicide. Looking ahead, I hope to continue working with mental health agencies to eliminate suicide from our County and increase mental health awareness. I also plan to continue working with private entities, and local and state agencies to provide assistance and information that can keep Stoddard County a safe and positive place to live and work.

As Coroner I always strive to be professional, helpful and compassionate during what is a family's worst day. I will continue to speak for those who no longer have a voice to ensure that every death in Stoddard County is properly investigated. I will always ensure that the deceased and families are treated with dignity and respect. In addition, it is my duty to be mindful of taxpayers money. That makes me proud to say that after saving taxpayers over \$12,000 in 2023 our office has now saved taxpayers over \$35,000 in a three year period.

2023 budget information Total budgeted: \$60,978.99

Total actual: \$48,848.75

2023 case information

*The following information is in regards to Coroner's Office cases only and does not include deaths occurring under the care of a physician such as hospice.*

Total cases investigated and certified by the Coroner's office: 117 Scene responses: 88

Natural Causes: 94

Homicide: 1

Suicide: 8

Motor vehicle accident: 6 Accident (fire): 2 Accident (fall): 2 Accident (other): 2 Cases pending: 2

**Age groups**

0-18: 5

19-45: 18

46-70: 47

70 and over: 47

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